

Senator Toni Harp
Appropriations Committee Co-Chair
Legislative Office Building, Room 2700
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Dear Senator Toni Harp,

My name is Nicole Rode and I am a Sophomore in the Wamogo agriscience program in Litchfield. I live in Thomaston and I attend this regional agriscience school choice program because I am very interested in the study of large animals. Wamogo helps supply me with every aspect of the farming business that I need to know in order to one day become a successful farmer. The hands-on class room time in the barn allows me to have first hand experience so that when I am alone, I will know and understand what to do. My SAE is breeding and selling goats and goat soap. Coincidentally, goats, sheep and their products are ranked 44th most valuable product on sale by commodity group with a quantity of 1,094. It is rated 50th in the universe. The goat farming business is fairly successful as you can see. I raise my goats until they are of age and then I breed them and once they kid, or give birth, I will sell the kids, baby goats, and the goat soap that I plan on making with the mother's milk. Right now, my goat is of age to breed. With the help of the animal science teacher and the activities that we do, I will know what it is that I will have to prepare. Recently, the school's ewes gave birth. My class got to watch and learn about what to do, when to do it, and how to do it if anything went wrong. This is useful for me because when my goats give birth, they will be relying on me to assist them safely through the process. Ag prepares me with the tools I need to be on my own. We learn cost management, and the best way to make a profit. In fact there has been an, "increase [of] the percentage of consumer dollars spent on Connecticut grown ...food dollars spent on locally grown from an estimated 1% to 5% by 2020" according to the Connecticut Farm Bureau. All the teachers and students are so involved with the FFA, whether it is pie sales, bake sales, or our annual woof washes. I am thankful that I got accepted into this program because of the unique experience that I get through this school that I know few other kids in the nation are receiving.

I am writing this letter to encourage you to please urge the Appropriations Committee to pledge 9 million dollars of the school choice funding increases proposed in the Governor's budget to the state's 19 regional (vo-ag) agriscience programs. Our agriscience programs have been drastically underfunded for over 20 years as compared to the magnet schools, charter schools, vocational technical schools and the other school choice funding programs. (Please see attached flyer with details)

This will allow hundreds of more students like me to enroll in these successful programs so they will have the same positive experience I am having now.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

